

what's right for the American people and to side with the overwhelming percentage of Americans suffering out there in this economy.

For an entire year, the majority in the House has not offered a single bill to create a single job. In fact, the only thing that the Congress has been doing is creating an environment where public sector jobs are cut, and where private sector jobs, though they have been growing, are offset by those public sector cuts, leaving us with an unemployment rate which we're happy to have at 8.6 percent, but within the historical context is still a national disgrace and an outrage to have unemployment at 8.6 percent for so very long. But we're happy to have it because it has been as high as 10.

And now we're threatening to leave more than 2 million Americans, including 13,000 in my home State of Minnesota, out in the cold during the holiday season by taking away their unemployment insurance.

Right now, 14 million people are unemployed, and companies really aren't hiring. For most of these people, unemployment insurance is the only thing that's keeping them in their homes and not out on the street.

According to the Census Bureau, unemployment insurance has pulled 3.2 million Americans out of poverty last year. And that's why Congress needs to make sure that all Americans, Mr. Speaker, continue to have this vital lifeline available.

Any credible economist will tell you that unemployment insurance creates jobs. Every dollar invested in unemployment insurance yields a return of \$1.52 in economic growth.

At least 200,000 jobs would be lost if Congress fails to pass the extension of unemployment insurance benefits. Congress must not leave Washington for the holidays without extending unemployment benefits that create jobs and put money into the pockets and on the tables of millions of Americans.

□ 1030

Both Democrat and Republican politicians, we together have not passed that jobs bill. While the Republicans are in the majority, and I believe bear the weight of the responsibility, it's a responsibility of every Member of Congress to call for the extension of unemployment insurance benefits and jobs at this critical time.

America can't wait. We shouldn't be leaving hardworking Americans high and dry this holiday season. This holiday season, we can spur economic growth, create jobs, and strengthen the middle class by doing the right thing of extending unemployment insurance benefits.

On behalf of the good people who play by the rules and lost their jobs because of Wall Street greed, and while this majority looked the other way, I urge all of my colleagues to support the extension of unemployment insurance benefits.

AFGHANISTAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. KINZINGER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. KINZINGER of Illinois. There has been a lot of talk lately about Afghanistan. You hear it every day. You heard it just a little bit ago about why are we in Afghanistan? What are we fighting for? Isn't it time to go home?

I've got to tell you the easy thing to do is to stand up and say let's just declare victory and let's leave, and then whatever happens after we're gone, that's not our fault anymore. It's not our problem. That's the easy thing to do.

You know, the America I grew up in and continue to grow in and live in is not the country that always picks the easy thing. The thing about the American DNA is, I believe we do typically the right thing.

Now, let me tell you, I'm still a pilot in the military. I still fly for the Air National Guard, and I've had the privilege and honor of serving overseas with my fellow men and women in uniform. Although most of my experience was in Iraq, I remember in Iraq a time when Members of this House stood up and said that the war in Iraq is lost, that there is no way to win, and it's time to just come home.

And we see today that now the American troops are coming home from Iraq but under a condition of victory. And while I have concerns about that timetable for withdrawal, I think anybody would agree that that's better than had we just in 2006 and 2007 folded up and taken the easy way.

So let me ask my fellow Members of Congress and let me ask the American people, what is it we're fighting for in Afghanistan?

I have here a very disturbing but a very appropriate picture of what it is that we're fighting for.

The young girl you see on the top, her name is BiBi. BiBi is 17 years old. When BiBi was 12 years old, she was sold to somebody basically as a slave as a result of a member of her family committing a crime and selling her as reparations for that crime. For 5 years she was beaten by her husband until one day she decided to run away to seek freedom.

Well, she was caught. Her husband caught her, drug her back to his house, and the Taliban, as a way to enact justice, forced him, with his brother holding her down, forced him to cut off her nose and to cut off her ears. She then proceeded to basically crawl to her uncle's house, and her uncle ignored her. And somebody finally called the hospital, and they said go to an American forward-operating base. They'll take care of you.

You hear the stories of the major who took care of her talking about how she showed up and talking about the fright that she had in her eyes.

I took a trip to Afghanistan recently and saw a village where I saw a man who was standing on a berm with an

AK-47. And I talked to him through a translator, and he informed me that not 2 days ago his daughter fell into a well and drowned. But yet he still believes that his village needs protecting. And he could be sitting at home mourning the loss of his daughter, and I'm sure he mourned the loss, but he was standing out defending his village because he wants what Americans want, what anybody around the world wants. They want security. They want to be able to raise their family. BiBi just wants to live her life without being beaten and sold into slavery.

Today, because of the American presence in Afghanistan and that of our coalition partners, you see the picture at the bottom of this, the best part of this picture, and that is girls in school learning to read and write, learning that there is a world out there, learning that despite where they were raised and born, they, too, can have some of the freedoms and some of the privileges that folks in the rest of the world and especially in the United States have.

So let me say this. It is so easy to stand up and say this is not worth it. But I'm going to tell you the second verse of the Star Spangled Banner has a line that says "Oh conquer we must, when our cause it is just."

Ladies and gentlemen, what we're doing in Afghanistan is not extending an empire. It's bringing freedom to millions of people, taking out jihadists that would kill people simply because you believe differently than them, and we are standing up for freedom around the globe. The greatest disinfectant to terrorism is freedom.

Ladies and gentlemen, the fight in Afghanistan, though difficult, is worth it, and I come in today and stand up and say "God bless you" to those that have gone over there and put on the uniform, and I say "thank you" for your service to your country. The fight is worth it.

TAKING CARE OF THOSE AT HOME

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL) for 5 minutes.

Mr. RANGEL. I have been so moved by the preceding gentleman's remarks about the good work that Americans can do, especially when the argument is which side are we on, terrorism or freedom.

I don't know how many cases in the world that the United States of America can intercede in, but I do know that, as we see these horrible examples of what people can do to their own people, that we have thousands of Americans who have volunteered to support our flag and the integrity of the United States who have been killed. And it just seemed to me that when we're talking about the protection of a human body, whether it's losing a limb or your sight or your face, no matter what it is—and especially your life—that if America is going to take this

position, all Americans should be prepared to make the sacrifices as the gentleman before me has.

I think it's so unfair and borders on corrupt when people talk about where our American men and women should be, defending freedom in foreign countries, when America hasn't spoken. Presidents haven't declared war. And we find ourselves talking about volunteers when it's abundantly clear that everybody does not assume the same sacrifices, whether we're talking about taxes or loss of life.

So whether we're talking about Australia, Afghanistan, Iraq, before the people make a decision—and that's what we're for in the House—before they make a decision, at least say that everyone has to participate in that decision and not those who, for economic reasons, find themselves in communities with the highest, the very highest unemployment.

And I laud what happens to all of us who volunteered, because when that flag goes up, you salute the flag. The President becomes the Commander in Chief, and there is only one thing to do. And that's win and protect the integrity of the United States.

But I submit that we have to have a draft that's a part of—what?—the United States, and not a plea for those people, for economic reasons, who will have to protect themselves. I don't think I've ever said this before, but I was thinking that my brother volunteered long before Pearl Harbor, which today we commemorate, and so he was unable to say, nor I, that he volunteered because we were being attacked.

□ 1040

Several years later, in 1948, when the war was over, I volunteered, and that was before the North Koreans invaded South Korea. I would like to walk away by saying how patriotic we both were; but really what motivated me was the excitement my mother would get in receiving a check from my older brother. It wasn't a question of whether she loved him more; it was that she needed it.

I was a teenager—11, 12 years old. The one thing I knew, I wanted to make my mother as happy as my brother did and send her that allotment check. Yet, today, I have medals, and I've been lorded by the Koreans and everyone else; but when I think about it, there were economic reasons that made me a "hero," and there are economic reasons that make the heroes that we have who defend our country and our flag so well.

I didn't expect to talk about that; but in hearing that, 70 years ago, we were attacked and of the American lives that were lost and then of coming back to what has happened in Afghanistan, I am reminded of how unfair this system is for the greatest country in the world and of the hope and division that we're losing and of what separates us from so many other countries in which you can be born into the pits of

poverty, and yet you can always dream that, in this great country, you can succeed.

So many Members of Congress and so many members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus are the first ones who ever went to college—their parents were the first ones in generations who were able to become professionals—and then had the great honor to represent the United States of America in this Congress.

I am sorry to have deviated from why I came to the well. What I can say to other Members is: God bless America. We have to keep fighting for equality and justice for all.

IN HONOR OF THE BLUE STAR MOTHERS OF AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. TIPTON) for 5 minutes.

Mr. TIPTON. Yesterday, legislation that I sponsored, along with Senator MICHAEL BENNET from Colorado, passed the House floor. This bill for the Blue Star Mothers of America updated their congressional charter for the modern era.

Mr. Speaker, I am privileged today, particularly on this day as we commemorate the attack on Pearl Harbor 70 years ago, to be able to rise to honor the Blue Star Mothers of America—the people, the women of America, who have been providing much needed assistance to our Nation's active duty servicemen and -women, veterans, and military families since 1942.

Founded during the height of World War II, the Blue Star Mothers are a nonpartisan veterans' service organization, composed of mothers of current and former servicemembers. Today, over 5,000 dedicated women perform a wide variety of important volunteer services for our troops, providing transportation, supplies, food, and emotional support. More than 225 local chapters across the United States carry out the mission of supporting our troops, our veterans, and the families of our fallen heroes, as well as developing individual projects to assist the specific needs of the military in their own communities. Last month alone, thousands of care packages were sent to our troops overseas, and chaplains and commanders across the military received boxes of supplies and gifts to be able to be distributed to the comrades.

The Blue Star Mothers were originally formed to bring their children home, to ensure that they were given the benefits that they deserved, and to provide them with a vast support network upon their arrival. The organization has since expanded to include other forms of assistance, including rehabilitation, family services, and civil defense. This was chartered by Congress in 1960.

Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to be able to recognize the Blue Star Mothers of America, and I rise today to thank

these patriotic women for their commitment to serving the needs of America's military community and for making a difference in the lives of those who sacrifice the most.

Several years ago, I had the opportunity to be at the graduation at the United States Air Force Academy. My son-in-law was graduating, and Secretary Gates delivered the commencement address. At that time, he noted that that freshman class was the first to enter the academy after 9/11, knowing full well that they would be putting themselves in harm's way.

We have the finest volunteer military that the world has ever seen. May God continue to bless this country with such men and women who will always stand for freedom.

WALL STREET AND MF GLOBAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) for 5 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, numerous stories have come out over the last few weeks, all detailing the corruption and outright fraud on Wall Street.

First, there was the recent news about former Secretary of the Treasury Hank Paulson's inappropriately tipping off a few key friends from Goldman Sachs and other Wall Street tycoons about the impending collapse of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac so that those friends could hedge and make money on that insider knowledge. Then a judge in New York threw out one of the orchestrated settlements between Citigroup, which was a bank at the center of the wrongdoing, and the Securities and Exchange Commission, which allowed that bank to walk away from cases of fraud without admitting any wrongdoing.

This past weekend, "60 Minutes" interviewed a former executive vice president at Countrywide Financial, a giant and duplicitous player in the U.S. mortgage business. This woman was in charge of fraud investigations at the company before the financial crisis.

According to her, "Countrywide loan officers were forging and manipulating borrowers' income and asset statements to help them get loans they weren't qualified for and couldn't afford." She went on to say that all of the recycle bins, wherever they looked in that company, were full of signatures that had been cut off of one document and put onto another and then photocopied or faxed. According to her, the fraud she witnessed was systemic, taking place in Boston, Chicago, Miami, Detroit, Las Vegas, Phoenix, and elsewhere. She was fired before she could speak to government regulators about the extent of fraud she had documented.

What is most troubling is that these stories are not isolated. The FBI testified before Congress as early as 2004 that they were seeing an epidemic in white collar crime. They stated the FBI did not have anywhere near